



Tales Out of School

Fall 2010



Learning About CSA Farms

Many people are unfamiliar with the term “CSA.” CSA stands for “**Community Supported Agriculture.**” CSA is a term coined for a type of direct farm-to-consumer marketing trend that cuts out the supermarkets, middlemen, and the many long distance transport carriers by providing locally grown, fresh foods direct to consumers at better prices for farmers. A new twist on an old idea, Community Supported Agriculture gives consumers more say in the types and varieties of foods and food products they can purchase locally, and the methods of production used to bring that food to their tables.

The first CSA type farm developed in Japan in 1965 and grew out of a concern for the detrimental health effects of chemically contaminated foods and the high costs of importing food. From there, CSA farms began to spring up in Switzerland and spread across Europe. The east and west coast areas of the U.S. began to see the startup of CSA farms in the 1980’s. Today, there are well over 3,000 CSA farms in America, and those numbers have risen dramatically in the last five years, including a growing number in Kansas.

Some CSA farms are owned by their membership, as a sort of co-op. The organization buys or leases land, equipment, seeds, and supplies. It hires managers and laborers to do the work. The membership pays the wages and expenses for the food produced, and divides up the food equally among its participating members.

More simplified forms of CSA begin with a farmer who already owns land and equipment and has experience in production methods. The grower offers harvest shares in a subscription format. Subscribers (also called “shareholders”) purchase a seasonal share that is priced to cover the grower’s expenses and labor to produce various crops according to the preferences of the subscribers. The cost of the share is usually paid up front before the growing season begins to provide a guaranteed

market to the grower and to fund the purchase of seeds and supplies. The majority of CSA’s in the U.S. follow this model.

CSA farms offer a limited number of shares each season and often have waiting lists. Share seasons may run 12-26 weeks or more, depending upon the length of the growing season or other arrangements. Shareholders receive a share of whatever is being harvested on the farm each week. Annual costs for weekly shares range from around \$250 for short season shares, up to \$600 or more for longer seasons or higher volume shares. Many CSA farms offer full and half shares, along with optional add-ons, such as eggs, meats, bakery goods, or other farm products.

Shareholders share in the risks, responsibilities, and rewards of farming. Shareholders generally participate in the transportation and distribution aspects of food production, providing farm pickups and deliveries to drop-off points in their communities. Some CSA’s require their members to work on the farm for a specified number of hours as part of their “fair share.” Most CSA’s either hire apprentices or depend on volunteer labor to bring in the crops. With the CSA model, there is a greater sense of “community” and “connection” with the source of food and the farm.

Those who buy in to the CSA concept learn to eat with the seasons, enjoy the health benefits of farm fresh foods, and better appreciate the effort that goes into raising wholesome foods. With the CSA model there is little waste of food and fewer market uncertainties for growers. Many CSA farms follow organic or chemical-free production methods, although not all are certified by the USDA.

CSAs are a driving force in the growing local food movement and provide a real alternative to standard supermarket fare. The rise in popularity of CSA’s has given incentive to young growers to realize their dream of a small-scale agriculture enterprise with

Learning About CSA Farms cont.

a ready market, good demand, and profitability built into the equation.

To find a CSA farm near you, go to www.localharvest.org and discover one of the most rewarding educational adventures for you and your family. Find that missing connection with your food by joining a local CSA farm.

John and Ramona Crisp are the owners and operators of Shepherd's Valley CSA farm near Americus, Kansas, offering a multitude of opportunities to learn about organic production methods and sustainable farming practices. John is the founder and pastor of the Grace Bible Church in Americus, teaching and practicing a simple agrarian lifestyle, incorporating biblical themes and parallels within the context of land stewardship.

Books for Young Readers

Sustainable Living: For Home, Neighborhood and Community

By Mick Winter

It's about your neighborhood and how you and your neighbors can benefit from working and sharing together. It's about your community and how all of its neighborhoods and residents can benefit from cooperative effort. The book offers a section on community supported agriculture that includes listings of several helpful hints websites. \$12.00 on Amazon.com

Civic agriculture: reconnecting farm, food, and community

By Thomas A. Lyson

While the American agricultural and food systems follow a decades-old path of industrialization and globalization, a counter trend has appeared toward localizing some agricultural and food production. Thomas A. Lyson, a scholar-practitioner in the field of community-based food systems, calls this rebirth of locally based agriculture and food production civic agriculture because these activities are tightly linked to a community's social and economic development. Civic agriculture embraces innovative ways to produce, process, and distribute food, and it represents a sustainable alternative to the socially, economically, and environmentally destructive practices associated with conventional large-scale agriculture. Farmers' markets, community gardens, and community-supported agriculture are all forms of civic agriculture. Lyson describes how, in the course of a hundred years, a small-scale, diversified system of farming became an industrialized system of production and also how this industrialized system has gone global. He argues that farming in the United States was modernized by employing the same techniques and strategies that transformed the manufacturing sector from a system of craft production to one of mass production

Superbia!:

31 ways to create sustainable neighborhoods

By Daniel D. Chiras, David Wann

This book helps to emphasize the isolation of the typical suburban house and shows how the community design seems to emphasize private space instead of community. This promotes a lack of connection. Could the way we live promote depression and a lack of friendships? Could the way we build communities lessen domestic violence, encourage community interaction, and promote a general feeling of well-being? Community supported agriculture is a part of the solution, according to the authors. Community supported agriculture helps to re-establish a community connection. \$18.21 on Amazon.com.

City Farmer

By Lorraine Johnson

City Farmer celebrates the new ways that urban dwellers across North America are reimagining cities as places of food production. From homeowners planting their front yards with vegetables to guerilla gardeners scattering seeds in neglected urban corners, gardening guru Lorraine Johnson chronicles the increasing popularity of innovative urban food growing. By Lorraine Johnson. \$10.76 at Barnes and Noble.com.

Gardening by the Numbers

by Cecilia Minden

Age Range: 9 to 12

Gardening is a great way to get in touch with nature, and a great way to put your math skills to work. Whether you are drawing a diagram for a new garden or calculating the amount of water your seedlings need, your math skills can help your plants grow. Look inside to find out more about how planting a garden can help you harvest delicious produce and better math skills!

Books for Young Readers cont.

A Little Piece of Earth

By Maria Finn

A hip, eco-friendly guide with fun and easy projects for all levels. Eating locally has so many benefits—for the planet, for your health, and for your tastebuds—and you can't get much more local than your very own backyard. But is planting a garden too big a commitment? Then this book is for you. *A Little Piece of Earth* is all about starting small, with more than fifty self-contained, doable projects. Whether you have a yard, a terrace, a rooftop, or just a windowsill, there are plenty of ideas and inspirations to choose from. Harvest your own precious vanilla pods from a pot indoors. Grow savory shiitakes on a small log in your kitchen. Build a miniature vineyard trellis on your deck or build a raised bed on your patio. Recipes for using your homegrown bounty are sprinkled throughout. Charming illustrations guide you through step-by-step, and there's a complete resources section. This is about making dirt work for you, taking some control over your food supply, and, most important, enriching your life with the quiet, simple pleasures of produce raised organically with your own hands.

Our Community Garden

by Barbara Pollak

Age Range: 4 to 8

In this special garden, each child plants an item that reflects his or her personality and/or ethnic heritage. Barbara Pollak's delightful illustrations show what the children do there - from playing hide-and-seek around giant sunflowers and counting ladybugs to weeding, digging, and making compost mazes. The garden provides a venue for all the children and their families to gather and celebrate with a potluck of dishes made from the garden's harvest. Readers will enjoy following the progress of the garden and will be inspired to start one of their own.



Photos by Roger Heineken

Organic Food and Farming

by Lauri S Friedman

Over thirty-five years ago, Greenhaven Press began publishing the Opposing Viewpoints series to help students gain an awareness of current issues and develop critical thinking skills. The Introducing Issues with Opposing Viewpoints series continues that tradition, presenting a wealth of information on contemporary issues in a colorful, easy-to-read format. In addition to pro/con articles, each Introducing Issues with Opposing Viewpoints volume includes appealing features designed to help students understand the complexities of current issues.

- Full-color photographs, charts, graphs, and cartoons supplement the text
- Sidebars present easy-to-understand statistics
- Engaging fact boxes provide at-a-glance information
- Questions that focus on vocabulary aid reading comprehension
- Glossary, annotated bibliography, Web sites, and organizations to contact supplement student research

Lesson Plans

Bringing the Market to the Farm

By Cheryl McGaughey

Grades 6-8

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Be able to define community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Identify community supported agriculture (CSA) projects in their area
- Recognize that there are both costs and benefits of CSAs for consumers, producers and the local community
- <http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.php?lesson=EM403&page=teacher>

Food

By Cari Ladd, M.Ed.,

Grades 6-12

THE PROJECT

This lesson plan features the film and book from the project, *No Impact Man*, which follows a family in New York City as they examine how they live, exchange old habits for more environmentally-friendly ones, and discover in the process that such changes actually make them happier and healthier. The lesson also incorporates Web site resources that build on themes that emerge from the family's experiences. Educators can use this lesson to help students explore how their food choices affect the environment and our quality of life.

<http://noimpactproject.org/educators-middle-high-school-environment-curriculum-html/lesson-plan-3-of-5-food/>

How do farmers grow food around the world?

Grade levels: 4 to 6.

Subjects: Science, Environmental Education, Geography

Duration: five 45-60 minutes sessions + individual research time + ongoing garden maintenance time + community celebration event time

Description: There is a dual focus for this activity: investigating the origin of and growing methods for a food, and growing a garden. Over the course of several weeks, you can introduce different methods used by farmers to grow food, why different methods are used in different parts of the world, and engage the students by having them test various growing methods.

<http://www.cbd.int/ibd/2008/Resources/teachers/3.shtml>

The Mystery of the Amazing Farmers

By: Suzanne Gallagher

Grade level: 3-5, 6-8

In this lesson you will be taking on the role of an investigative reporter to solve the Amazing Farmer Mystery. The goal will be to use seven clues provided throughout the lesson in order to figure out how so few farmers can produce enough food and fiber for the nation.

<http://www.econedlink.org/lessons/index.php?lesson=EM206&page=teacher>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

Curriculum Guides

Follow the links below to web-based curricula. This site offers curriculum for all age groups and a range of topics. Includes a link to Sustainable Agriculture Resources & Programs for K-12 Youth, developed by the SARE Outreach. This new guide features more than 50 programs and curricula nationwide, and includes direct links, program contact information and ideas for integrating lessons into school programs.

<http://www.sare.org/coreinfo/curriculum.htm>



Learning about sustainable agriculture issues can start at any age. Check here for instructional books, teaching aids, course outlines, support organizations, and other teaching resources for all levels - kindergarten, high school, and beyond. This site provides several links to curriculum resources.

http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=2&tax_level=2&tax_subject=300&level3_id=0&level4_id=0&level5_id=0&topic_id=1436&placement_default=0

Website Resources

<http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>

*Local Harvest, Real Food, Real Farmers,
Real Communities*

This website features CSA farm finders for every community across the United States, as well as information on what to expect from participation in CSA. This site also features blogs, newsletters, and recipes all designed to enhance participation in CSA.

http://www.umassvegetable.org/food_farming_systems/csa/

This UMassAmherst website provides an excellent description of CSA while acknowledging the pros and the cons of an investment into this personal form of agriculture. This site provides a resources page that is filled with a list of helpful websites ranging from CSA organizations to individual farms. A list of CSA periodicals, videos, and books is also provided.

<http://www.biodynamics.com/csa.html>

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Associations website provides informative descriptions of what CSA's are while it also provides information ranging from becoming a member of a farm to apprenticeship opportunities available at different farms located throughout the country. There is a list of resources, including books and DVD available for sale through the website's store.

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/curriculum/index.htm>

Toward a sustainable agriculture:

This website includes a free curriculum covering CSAs. It provides 6 modules designed to take the student through everything from the growth of vegetables to the harvesting of animals. The curriculum is divided into six different modules: an introductory module and five more narrowly focused modules. Each module is designed to be taught in as little as 5 hours of class time (or one week), though if you choose to use all the material in the module, it will take longer. The modules are designed to be taught independently; however, we strongly recommend that teachers ensure that their students are familiar with the basic concepts covered in Module I before proceeding to any of the other modules. These basic concepts can be introduced (or reviewed) in as little as two hours.

<http://www.caff.org/programs/farm2school.shtml>

CAFF: Community Alliance with Family Farmers

This site provides information on how to create connections with local farmers to bring lesson plans to life.

Farm to School Guide for Parents and Community Members.

This "how-to" guide to farm to school for parents and community members provides information, resources, and a step by step guide on how to start farm to school programs or plug into existing ones.

Farm to School Guide for Food Service Staff.

This "how-to" guide to farm to school for school food service, provides information, resources, and a step by step guide on how to start a farm to school purchasing program and connect with important stakeholders.

<http://www.greenpeople.org/csa.htm>

Green People Website

Offers a large listing of several farms from across the United States and some farms from Canada, Mexico, India, Australia, and more. This site is an excellent resource because it offers links to all of the farms listed on the site.

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/terms/srb9902terms.shtml>



This site offers a comprehensive list of terminology associated with CSA. The following terms are commonly associated with sustainable agricultural systems. None are synonymous with sustainable agriculture; each relates to the concept in a different way. Most come under the umbrella of sustainable agriculture. A few, including biotechnology and precision farming, provoke much disagreement as to their appropriate use in a sustainable system. Some of the terms described are conceptual in nature, while others are strictly methodological. Many are combinations of both approaches. Several of these concepts and practices have very literal meanings that have been colored by their historic use and practitioners' experiences.

Mary, Mary... *Where does your garden grow?*

by Tracy Million Simmons

Take a look at the food on your table. Where did it come from? Do you know the name of the person who put the seeds in the ground, then carefully tended young green plants until they grew flowers that turned to beans to be picked from the stalk? Can you picture the green leaves of those potato plants before they began to wilt and fade, letting the farmer know that the tasty spuds beneath the ground were ready to harvest? Did you eagerly await the ripening of that tomato, watching it turn from green to pale yellow with streaks of pink and finally red?

There was a time when spring was the season of eating fresh greens and summer meant plates of sliced tomatoes would be served as a main dish with ears of fresh sweet corn as a side. A can of beans was more likely to come from shelves in a cool, dark spot in the family cellar than from a well-lit grocery store. You didn't even have to read a label. It was evident through the clear glass canning jars what resided within, and even better, it was likely that you had a hand in picking, shelling, or washing those beans as mother prepared to store them.

Today's typical salad may very well have travelled 1,500 to 2,500 miles. That's further than most of us went for summer vacation. That tomato was likely picked green, packaged and boxed, and loaded on a truck where it travelled to a warehouse or facility and was then processed or repackaged again. Because of all the travelling our produce does these days, even the very nature of our food has changed. Rather than growing a tomato because it tastes good--because you just can't resist that first juicy burst of flavor when you sink your teeth into it--selection is based on uniformity of crop. The modern tomato has to be firm enough to travel well, ripen in transit, and still look picture perfect after sitting in warehouses and on loading docks for untold hours at a time.

We aren't limited to eating a typical salad, however. Farmers markets and community supported agriculture operations are growing in popularity and demand. By getting to know our farmers and sources of the foods on our table, we have the power to improve ourselves and strengthen our communities. From 1994 to 2010, the number of farmers markets in the U.S. has more than tripled. Consider the following:

- **Better for your taste buds.** Produce sold at farmers markets is typically harvested no more than 24 hours in advance. Fresh produce equals better taste.
- **Healthier eating.** Knowing more about where your food comes from and how it gets to your plate helps you to make healthier choices. As well, eating seasonally helps us increase the variety in our diets and therefore realize the health benefits of a wider range of foods.
- **Financially stronger communities.** Study after study shows that when we buy local, more of that money stays in the community. Nowhere is that more true than with our local farmers, who further benefit our communities by growing their businesses and supporting other local businesses.
- **Socially connected communities.** The farmers market is a great place to get to know your neighbors. Knowing that those are Farmer John's potatoes or apples from the orchard down the road not only increases confidence in our food supply, it enriches our communities by bringing neighbors and neighborhoods together again.
- **Preserving resources for the communities of tomorrow.** By using fewer fossil fuels to fill our pantries, we're creating a cleaner environment and preserving our future. We can encourage our local farmers to utilize sustainable methods of agriculture that will help make sure our ground water, our soil, and other natural resources remain in good condition for the next generation.

Resources:

Kansas Farmers Markets

<http://www.ksfarmersmarkets.org/>

Nebraska Farmers Markets

<http://www.agr.state.ne.us/pub/apd/produce.htm>

USDA, Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>

Tracy is the farmers market manager in Emporia, Kansas. She comes from a long line of gardeners and farmers, but didn't inherit a very green thumb. Thus, she is an enthusiastic share holder in a local CSA and loves taking advantage of all that farmers markets have to offer.
